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The Major.

BY
G. I. HOLDSHIP. 50457 X 2

(P. M. Burgess, Esq.
1892)

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PREFACE.

In regard to "Colonel Chabert," I would preface that it is a dramatization of Balzac's tale, "*Le Colonel Chabert*," a short story in his "*Scènes de la vie privée*." I have endeavored to retain the original wording and arrangement as much as possible, especially in the character of Colonel Chabert, but in many instances have been compelled to alter and omit in order to meet the necessities of dramatic action. I would also add that some time after this drama had been commenced—the entire work having been planned and partly executed in the latter part of 1890—I was advised that a similar work was in preparation for the French stage. Whether this latter has ever been completed I am not aware.

As to "The Major," being intended for a *lever du rideau*, its position is, of course, proper. I feel this apology is due Balzac for placing my own composition before his masterly characterization.

DECEMBER, 1892.

THE MAJOR.

AN ORIGINAL COMEDY

IN

ONE ACT.

47193 X¹

BY

G. I. HOLDSHIP.

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BY
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THE MAJOR.

CHARACTERS.

MAJOR BOWENDALE.

HENRY LAWSON.

DICK LAWSON, his son.

MRS. LARRIMAR.

ALICE LARRIMAR, her daughter.

SCENE—Larrimer summer residence at the seaside. House at left center. Lawn and walks to front and back. Rocking chair and hammock on porch. Cushions on steps. Garden seat to right.

TIME—The present.

THE MAJOR.

Mrs. Larrimar discovered seated in rocking chair on porch sewing.

MRS. LARRIMAR.—James! James! Do come out here, instead of stewing yourself up in that close room. The breeze out here is delightful. James! Do you hear? Bless me, the dear man is so intent on his book that he has probably forgotten that he has such a thing as a wife. Well, that is what it is to marry a student. There he sits day after day and night after night, wearing his dear old eyes out over his precious Greek roots, or his Egyptian hieroglyphics, and totally forgets that he ever had such troublesome things as a wife and daughter. By the way, where is Alice? I haven't seen her since luncheon, and it must be nearly four now. She said she was going for a walk—down to the hotel, probably. Dear me, what a hole! How on earth do men make such holes in their socks? In the heel, too. How uncomfortable it must have been. But then, I don't suppose he knew he was uncomfortable, or if he did he thought it was a Greek root that troubled him. Now, if Robert hasn't forgotten to water that hanging basket. The earth is as dry as punk, I can see from where I sit. I must—oh! You nasty little beast! (*starting up, dropping her work, and brushing wildly at the back of her neck.*) Ugh! I would rather meet a

wild hyena than one of those long-legged animals.
(*enter Alice from right.*)

ALICE.—Why, mother dear, what is the matter? You have dropped all your work. Wait, let me do it. (*she picks up basket.*)

MRS. LARRIMAR.—Thank you, dear. It was one of those daddy-long-legs. You know I never could bear even the thought of one. Oh, you may laugh. I know it's very foolish of me, but the moment one touches me I feel as if someone were scraping my backbone with a knife. Ugh! (*she shudders and rubs the back of her neck.*) I feel the beast yet. Did you have a nice walk, dear? It must have been very hot in the sun. Where did you go?

ALICE.—Oh, I went down to see Jenny, but her husband came last night, so I didn't get much good of her. The way she dotes on that man is wonderful, considering she was going to be so independent and do so much when she was at school. So I gave her up to her husband and sent them both out for a walk, and played with the baby. She is getting sweeter every day, the baby, I mean, and I tell Jenny I am going to run off with it some day.

MRS. LARRIMAR.—Bless me, child, you would be a pretty one to take charge of a baby. It would be all very well while it is laughing and crowing, but just let it get an attack of the colic, and you would be stuffing it up the chimney or in the icebox. You are the sweetest little daughter

in the world, but you are just like your father, dear man, and you both know more about Greek than you do about babies, and can work a problem in algebra quicker than you could darn a stocking.

ALICE.—It's a slander. I can darn a stocking, too. Here, give me that stocking instantly, and let me prove it to you. (*she tries to take the sock from her mother.*)

MRS. LARRIMAR.—No, no. I have nearly finished this one and I don't want to have to rip it out again. Try one of your own stockings in the basket, if you must do it. Dear knows there are enough holes in them. There, take that one. There is the needle. Now, get to work. If you darn that stocking, and wear it afterwards, why, I can say you are a genius.

ALICE (*darning.*)—Why, of course I can do it. You put the knot here, then run over and catch this side, then back again, over, and back. Why, it's as easy as rolling off a log.

MRS. LARRIMAR (*inspecting her work.*)—Yes, rolling off a log is supposed to be very easy. And so it is—to roll off, but the hard part is to roll off so you don't hurt yourself. And I am afraid, my dear, if you were to put that on you would think you had a log in your shoe, from the size of the knot. In the first place, you don't make any knot in darning, and in the next place you shouldn't run your threads so far apart. That would do very well for a mosquito bar, but I am afraid it will hardly do for a stocking.

VOICE IN THE HOUSE (*in a very loud tone.*)—Now, where is my pipe? I had it a moment ago, and now it's gone. Harriet, have you seen it?

MRS. LARRIMER.—He has lost his pipe now. Poor fellow, how these little things do worry him, when he notices them. He probably has it in his mouth, and it has gone out. Yes dear, I am coming. (*she goes in house.*)

ALICE.—Mother is the sweetest woman. Everything she does is just right, and she makes everybody feel so comfortable without the least effort on her part. And she doesn't have to know Greek to do it, either. I wish I were more like her. I have gone through college, but I can't darn a stocking the way she does. I shall have to learn, though, if I marry Dick. (*she works violently for some moments.*) Poor Dick! He does so hate the Major! I can't help teasing him a little when he shows his dislike so plainly, and then the Major is such a conceited man. He never imagines anyone could quiz him. But for the very absurdity of the thing one would think that he is in love with me,—or papa's money. I have thought several times he was going to propose to me, but I am not going to let him do that if I can help it. Well, I don't think that's as well done as it might be. Why it's rough and drawn up like that I can't imagine. (*she looks at it gravely.*) No, I don't think I should like to wear that. It doesn't look comfortable. In fact, it looks decidedly uncomfortable. I think I'll let mother finish that. (*she throws it in basket,*

and rises.) I do so love flowers, and Robert has such nice ones. He will hardly let me smell them, though, he is so careful with them. Who is that coming up the walk? Why, it's the Major. He seems to be in a hurry, too. Dear me, I am not fit to be seen. I must run. (*she runs hurriedly in house with sewing basket. Enter Major immediately after.*)

MAJOR.—She has gone in. I thought I would have caught her here, but I am too late. She could not have seen me. Yet stay! Can she suspect? No, I have been too circumspect. Men may find out that my feelings are not warlike; that I am not ferocious; that my outward seeming is but assumed. But with women I may play my part without danger of discovery. Nay, I must retain the reputation I have gained with them. The stake is too great. If weakness threatens to overcome me the thought of her,

Fair vision of delight,
The loadstone of my life,
Thy presence stays the wight
Who woes thee for his wife.

Poetry! (*he starts and looks around.*) Have I betrayed myself? No, I am alone. Alone! Then let me feast my hungering soul on that forbidden fruit. Away, away, my thoughts. Seek then thy native heights, far as the eagle soars from the things of this mundane life. Ah, no, they cannot fly, weighed down by sordid cares. Oh, my curses on the uncle, who, before my race began, laid out

my course of life to be that of a military man. A hero, leader, conqueror of the soil, such must I be. Oh, harsh decree, from which my heart, my mind, my soul recoil. Guns were my toys. Pistols, swords and cannon forced upon me; lulled to sleep by martial music; wakened by the trumpet's call—Oh! This, this for me, whose thoughts soar to those heights unknown to the common herd, where genius may mate with genius and exchange divine thoughts of harmony! But I am restrained by the dire thought of poverty. My uncle's will,—poetic thought, horrible reality,—this deters me. A Major, I am rich; a poet, I am a beggar. An envious cousin watches me; detectives dog my footsteps, seeking to catch me unawares. In secret only may I indulge in flights of fancy, brief moments of delight. Then must I don this hated garb, and be dissimulation's self. Ah, wealth, what a price I pay for thee, but without thee I cannot live. I have one hope,—to marry an heiress, and be released from this bondage. She is my choice, and it is for this that I am here to-day, to place my life, my happiness in her hands, myself at her feet. Yes, I have decided. This day must be my day of fate. I will no longer let my coward heart shrink from its task as it has so often done. My knees shall not tremble when she is near me, and my tongue shall utter the words it has so often refused to speak.

VOICE IN HOUSE (*in a very loud tone.*)—Stupid fool that I was! Where have my eyes been? I see it plainly now.

MAJOR.—Her father! Can he suspect? Have I betrayed myself before him? No, he has never seen me. And then he is a scholar. He knows nothing beyond his book. I am safe with him. Ha! Who is that coming up the road? A man and coming here! Now, Major, show thyself. Him! An oath, a military oath, to restore my war-like humor. Brrrr! Ten thousand devils! What's this! What's this! Damme, sir! Ah, that has the true ring. Now I feel that I can face a man. (*he stands near steps. Enter Dick whistling. He walks to the steps without observing the Major.*)

DICK } *at once* { The devil! That fool!
 MAJOR } { Zounds! My rival!

(*they draw apart and frown at each other.*)

MAJOR.—Sir, sir! What were you pleased to say? Well, well, sir! I am waiting.

DICK (*turning away*).—Pshaw!

MAJOR—Pshaw, sir! pshaw! Damme, sir, what do you mean by pshaw? Ten thousand imps of hades, sir! Do you take me for a cowardly civilian like yourself, sir? Do you know, sir, we soldiers are accustomed to shoot men for less than pshaw? Pshaw, indeed!

DICK (*aside*).—I must keep my temper. I am not going to quarrel with this fellow.

MAJOR (*aside*).—Have I overdone it? I must not go too far, or he may fight. Ha, no! He turns away. He is afraid. Then let me go for him.

(*aloud.*) Well, sir, no answer? Damme, sir! Is this contempt you put upon me, or is it the craven fear of a country lout? (*Dick walks to right. Major follows.*) Ho! Not so fast, sir. You cannot escape me thus. If country boys will insult an officer they must take the consequences.

DICK (*aside.*)—Why doesn't somebody come? I know my temper will get the better of me in a few moments, and I don't want to quarrel with him, here, at least. And I can't leave him either, or he would boast all over the place that he had frightened me away.

MAJOR (*aside.*)—Safe yet. He shows no sign of fight. (*aloud.*) What, silent yet, sir? Why, damme—but no, he is only a boy, and I must not take his silly speech in earnest, here of all places. Go, boy, the place protects you.

DICK.—This is too much. (*rushes forward and seizes the Major by the collar.*) You miserable, little imitation of a man! If you were worth the trouble I would cowhide you until the skin came off. Bah! (*releasing him.*) Get away, and don't tempt me.

MAJOR (*aside.*)—I have escaped alive. I see that I have gone too far. Shall I apologize? No, that would be my undoing. I must act injured innocence. (*aloud, limping.*) Young man, you have shaken me, crumpled my collar, shown me personal violence. But it is not the mere pain of the bruises that hurts me, for what are bruises to a veteran like myself?

DICK (*aside*.)—What does the fool mean?

MAJOR.—No, it is not that, for perhaps my soldier's temper, my brusk manner, annoyed you. It is the thought that in this place, the habitation of an angel, I am not secure from your violence, the violence of your jealousy. What would she say if she were to find out how you have abused me?

DICK.—Oh, say, come, now! Don't you think you are turning things around? I was under the impression that you were abusing me. How about the cowardly country boy, the country lout, the other little pet names I heard?

MAJOR.—But violence—assault upon my person? What would Miss Larrimar say to that?

DICK (*aside*.)—She would never forgive me if she found out I had shaken up her pet Major. Confound the fellow! I must pacify him somehow. (*aloud*.) See here, Major, I acknowledge that I let my temper get the better of me, and—and I regret having shaken you up the way I did.

MAJOR (*aside*.)—He weakens. (*aloud*.) To take me by the collar and shake me like a dog. Ha! This is nice, indeed!

DICK.—Come, come, Major, shake hands with me, and forget it all.

MAJOR.—Forget! Forget! With my neck almost disjointed, my clothing all but torn to shreds! Ha! It is not so easy to forget.

DICK.—Well, Major, I can't do any more than say I am sorry, and that I regret the whole matter. If you will not accept my apology, why—

MAJOR.—Apology! Ha! 'That puts another face upon the matter. An insult, an injury, demands satisfaction. Apologize, and I am disarmed. Young man, your hand. (*they shake hands.*)

DICK.—Well, Major, now that this little matter is settled, it isn't necessary—ah, we needn't let everybody know—in short, there is no use telling anybody about it, is there?

MAJOR (*aside.*)—I should think not! (*aloud.*) Since you ask it, my friend, I will consent to conceal it. Let the matter sink into oblivion and be forgotten. (*they shake hands.*) A foe turned friend, I would never offend.

DICK.—Why, Major, you are quite a poet.

MAJOR (*aside.*)—Heavens! I am ruined! (*aloud.*) What I! (*he laughs spasmodically.*) Ha! ha! (*aside.*) How am I to deceive him? (*aloud.*) Ha, ha! That's a good joke! (*aside.*) My brain is in a whirl. I can't think of any way—ah! I have it! (*aloud.*) Ha, ha! A joke, indeed! A rough soldier like myself, a poet! Ha! ha! That's good! Ha, ha! Why that was a quotation! Ha, ha! Shakespeare, you know.

DICK.—No, was it? And I thought it was original! Ha, ha! (*aside*) Shakespeare, indeed! Shakes-

peare never said such stuff as that. (*enter Mrs. Larrimar and Alice on porch.*)

ALICE.—Why, Major, is that you? Where did you come from? And Dick, too! I didn't know you were acquainted with each other. (*they come down steps.*)

MRS. LARRIMAR.—How hot you are, Dick. You must sit down and cool yourself.

MAJOR.—Ah! Yes indeed, we are well acquainted, I assure you. We—ah—(*aside*) What's his name, anyway. (*aloud.*) Yes, we—ah—we have met before you know.

ALICE.—So I should suppose. Have you known each other long?

MAJOR.—Oh, no, not long, you know. But we have been quite intimate since we met.

DICK.—I must refer you to the Major for an answer to that question. He can tell you better than I can.

MRS. LARRIMAR.—Major, I was asking Dick what it was you and he were laughing about when we came out. (*Major crosses to her and Dick to Alice.*) It must have been very amusing, for we heard you up stairs and came down to see who it was. (*Alice seats herself on garden seat. Dick talks to her from behind.*)

MAJOR.—Amusing! My dear Madam, it was the veriest essence of humor, the height of absurdity. Ha, ha! I really cannot help laughing yet at the

thought. Mr.—ah—our young friend here—ah—
(*pauses.*)

MRS. LARRIMAR.—Dick, you mean?

MAJOR (*aside.*)—Confound it! If she would only say his name.

MRS. LARRIMAR.—Do go on, Major. I am dying to hear the joke.

MAJOR.—Well, you see, I made a remark, a quotation from—ah—Milton, and our young friend here, ha, ha! thought it was original. Ha, ha!

MRS. LARRIMAR.—But, Major, I don't see any joke in that. I, too, have often thought you were a poet.

MAJOR (*aside.*)—Can she suspect? (*aloud.*) My dear Madam! I, a poet! I, whose thoughts turn to the humdrum things of barrack life; to whose lips oaths are more familiar than poetry! Ha, ha! Now, really, my dear Madam! You must pardon my laughing, but—(*they walk apart.*)

DICK (*bending over Alice.*)—Then what have I done that I am never to be alone with you, as we used to be before that infer—ahem!—the Major came? (*twirls a flower in his fingers. Alice takes it from him.*)

ALICE.—I hate to see anyone destroy a flower. It seems so cruel. I don't see why you dislike the poor Major so. I am sure you seemed to be such friends when we came out.

DICK.—Oh, I suppose we are good enough friends, as friends go, if you want us to be friends.

ALICE.—And then, he is such an interesting man, and such a brave soldier. I declare I feel quite wrought up sometimes after he has told me some of his recollections of the war.

DICK.—Oh, I dare say. If one could only believe all he says.

ALICE.—Now, there you go again! I declare, Dick, I shall be afraid to say a word to you for fear you will not believe me.

DICK.—You know well enough, Alice, that I would believe anything you say, without a question.

ALICE.—That is trust, indeed.

DICK.—Yes, it is trust. I would gladly trust you with my life.

ALICE.—Why, that is what the Major says.

DICK.—Oh, confound the Major!

ALICE.—Dick! how can you use such language to me! I am ashamed of you. I will not talk to you any more until I see that you are good. Major, I forgot to ask you, did you find any of those shells you were telling me about? (*Major crosses to her.*)

MRS. LARRIMAR.—Is your father any better, Dick? I haven't seen him for some time.

DICK.—Yes, he feels much better, to-day, though his old wound troubles him a good deal. He said

he was coming over here to-day to see Mr. Larrimar. He has made an addition to his collection, I believe, and wants to get your husband's opinion about it.

MRS. LARRIMAR.—Well, well. I have missed him very much since he has been sick. Ah, Dick, you should be very proud of that grand old man.

DICK.—Proud of him! There is no one like him. Thank you, Mrs. Larrimar, for those kind words. Ah, no one knows my father as I do. He is not a great man, as men call greatness, nor a rich man, as men call riches; but he is an honest man, and that is the greatest of them all.

(Mrs. Larrimar goes up on porch and seats herself in rocking chair. Dick sits on steps. During the following, Dick, who has his back turned toward Alice, tries to watch her and keep up the conversation with Mrs. Larrimar.)

ALICE.—And did she really have the heart to say that to you, Major.

MAJOR.—She did, upon my honor, she did. I never was so thunderstuck in my life.

ALICE.—What did you say?

MAJOR.—If I remember rightly, I said something like this: "Madam, I have endeavored to do you a favor, but you have seen fit to scorn my services, to receive my offer with unseemly laughter. Madam, I am deeply wounded, cut to the heart." *(he places his hand on his heart and sighs.)*

DICK (*aside, observing the action.*)—Confound it! He is proposing before my eyes.

ALICE.—And what did she say to that?

MAJOR.—She seemed conscious-stricken then, and wished me to shake hands with her in token of my forgiveness. I took her hand thus (*takes Alice's hand*) and said: "Madam, I forgive you, I do so willingly. But I can never forget. Farewell, believe me your well-wisher." Then I kissed her hand, thus, (*kisses Alice's hand.*)

DICK (*aside, throwing down cushion violently and rising.*)—That's more than I can stand.

MRS. LARRIMAR.—What, you are not going, are you, Dick? We expected you to stay to dinner.

DICK.—Oh, I—I am so sorry, but you see—

ALICE.—Oh, Dick, those engravings came last evening; I want you to see them. Mother dear, do take Dick in and show them to him. (*exit Mrs. Larrimar in house. Dick hesitates a moment, then follows.*)

MAJOR (*aside.*)—She has sent them away to be alone with me! Divine creature! She is mine. Now let me be eloquent on the theme of love. (*aloud.*) Ah, Miss Larrimar, this is a day when one feels—one feels—feels very warm.

ALICE.—One does, indeed. But I am afraid you are standing in the sun. Do sit down here.

MAJOR.—No, no. Believe me, I am happy here. (*aside.*) This will not do. I must brace up and

do better. If my knees would only behave themselves. (*aloud.*) 'Tis—ah—'tis from this spot I may gaze upon that damask cheek, those ruddy lips, that face so sweet. (*aside.*) Poetry! I must be careful.

ALICE.—It is so nice of you to make those pretty speeches, Major, but I am afraid you are only flattering me.

MAJOR.—Flatter you! No, believe me, that is impossible. (*aside.*) Now is my time, she is in a favorable mood. I will propose. (*aloud.*) Miss Larrimar, don't you think that when two young people are alone in a garden like this their thoughts naturally turn to the thought that—ah—that—hem—that it would be hot in the sun? (*aside.*) Ah, pshaw! I can't do it.

ALICE (*aside.*)—He is going to propose. I must stop him. (*aloud.*) Indeed, Major, I haven't given the subject any consideration, so—

MAJOR.—But what I mean to say is that when we two are alone amidst such beautiful surroundings, we are uplifted from the sordid cares of life, we feel that we must—ah—that—that we must admire it.

ALICE.—Do you admire this place, Major? But you cannot see half of it from here. The prettiest part is hidden behind those trees. Let us go down there and I will show you. (*she rises and goes out right.*)

MAJOR (*aside, following her.*)—My opportunity is lost. Oh! why can't I speak! I will do it yet! (*goes out.*) (*short pause.*)

VOICE IN HOUSE (*in very loud tone.*)—Now, what has become of that memorandum? Harriet, have you seen it?

(*another pause, then enter Dick hastily from house.*)

DICK.—Thank Heavens! I got away at last. To be in there looking at those confounded engravings, to have to say this one is good, that one is exquisite, and to know that all the time she was out here, with him hanging over her, making love to her, and she looking up into his eyes, and — oh! hang it all! She has looked at me the same way, and I dare say dozens of other men, too. I suppose she means to marry this fellow. He is rich, and she believes he is all he says he is. Well, I suppose I am not rich enough for her. Girls like money. She has been making a fool of me all along. Well, she sha'n't have me for her slave any longer. I am done with her. (*he starts to go. Enter Henry Dawson.*)

MR. DAWSON.—Why, Dick, old fellow, where are you going in such a hurry? What, my boy, in trouble?

DICK.—Ah, father, I have you yet. You are worth all the girls in the world.

MR. DAWSON.—Ah, so you and Alice have had a quarrel.

DICK.—Quarrel! No, but I never want to see her again.

MR. DAWSON.—Tell me about it. What has she done?

DICK.—Oh, she hasn't done anything in particular. Only she is going to marry that fellow.

MR. DAWSON.—Fellow! What fellow?

DICK.—The Major. I don't know his name.

MR. DAWSON.—Nonsense.

DICK.—No, it's true. I saw it all a few moments ago. I saw him bending over her, and kissing her hand, and she—

MR. DAWSON.—Well. And she—

DICK.—Well, let him do it.

MR. DAWSON.—Dick, Alice Larrimer is a girl in a thousand, true, lovable, everything a man would wish his wife to be. And Dick, she loves you. Don't let your jealousy mar both your lives. Oh, my son, I have seen just such quarrels end so very, very sadly; when two lovers found out years after, when they were old and it was too late, that their lives had been embittered by a hasty word. A girl likes to tease the man she loves. She does not wish him to think that she is too easily won. She likes to show her power, and uses any foil to play with the man she really loves. Believe me, I have read Alice Larrimar rightly. She is not an angel; she is a woman, and she must use her power. But I have seen that she loves you in many things that

would escape your notice. Have you told her that you love her?

DICK.—Not in so many words, exactly, but she must know—

MR. LAWSON.—Aye, she knows. She knew it before you knew it yourself, or she is no woman. Take my advice. Don't leave to-day until she knows you know she knows. There, my boy, puzzle that out, but don't go without me. (*exit in house.*)

DICK (*seating himself on garden seat.*)—She knows you know she knows. That sounds like a grammar lesson. I know, thou knowest, he, she or it knows. If anyone but the Pater had said it—but he meant something. He said “Not until she knows you know she knows.” She *knows*, you know, she *knows*. Oh, I told him that in the first place. It can't be that. She knows, you *know* she knows. Bosh! That's the same thing. Stop! I am going at this in the wrong way. What does she know? Why, that I love her. Well, she *knows* it. Then I know that she *knows* it. Then she is to know, that I know, that she knows it. Why, he means that I am to tell her! (*enter Alice behind him.*) What's the use? He has proposed to her by this time, and has no doubt been accepted. Hang it all! I'll do it any way. Anything is better than this suspense. (*Alice leans over the back of the seat and watches him. Dick turns and sees her.*)

DICK.—Where did you come from? How long have you been there?

ALICE.—Down the road. About two minutes.

DICK.—Where did you leave your Major?

ALICE.—No place.

DICK.—Oh, say, come now. He must be some place, you know.

ALICE.—I didn't leave him. He left me.

DICK.—You expect me to believe that, do you?

ALICE.—He did, though. He went to get a bunch of flowers, and I got tired waiting for him.

DICK.—You must have had a pleasant walk.

ALICE.—I did, very. The Major can be so entertaining.

DICK.—Oh, I dare say. What did you talk about?

ALICE.—Oh, lots of things. About his life in the barracks, his experience in action, how he liked being here, and—oh, many other things.

DICK.—Do you mean to tell me that he wasn't making love to you?

ALICE.—Well, he did say some very pretty things about me. Shall I tell you some of them? I know you will think them nice, too.

DICK.—Umph! Let's hear them.

ALICE.—Well, he said that this place was a little paradise, and that I was its queen.

DICK.—Ha, ha! And he is the little serpent.

ALICE.—No, he didn't say that. And, Dick, you mustn't laugh like that. It's rude.

DICK.—I take the laugh back. Go on, what else did he say? I want to hear something nice.

ALICE.—He said my eyes are as bright as stars. I am sure that is nice.

DICK.—I have told you that dozens of times. Did you think it nice when I said it?

ALICE.—Very nice. But you never told me they were mirrors of intelligence and love. He did.

DICK.—Well, even if I didn't, that's—

ALICE.—And that my hand was a thing of beauty, and my foot a dream.

DICK.—Confound his impertinence! What right has he to know you have a foot?

ALICE.—Of course he knows I have a foot. He could see me walking, couldn't he? And then when he helped me over the stile—

DICK.—What! Do you mean to tell me he had the audacity to lift you down from that stile?

ALICE.—Certainly. Do you think that he would have stood there and leave me perched up there helpless?

DICK.—Oh, all right. Only I'd like to see him do it, that's all. See here, Alice, are you going to marry him?

ALICE.—What a question!

DICK.—Oh, I dare say he is rich and all that, and that it is none of my business. But I want to hear you say so. Are you going to marry him?

ALICE.—He hasn't asked me yet.

DICK.—But he is going to. Are you going to accept him?

ALICE.—Do you think I had better?

DICK.—No, I have a much better plan than that. Marry me. Oh, Alice, I know I haven't much to offer you. I am poor compared with what he has, or your father's wealth, and I am not worthy of you. But I love you, Alice. I have loved you all my life, ever since we were boy and girl together. I think—I know if you could love me just a little, I could make you happy. (*he takes her hand.*) Can't you love me, Alice? (*enter Major with a bunch of flowers.*)

MAJOR.—Ah, Miss Larrimar, here you are. (*Dick walks away, swearing to himself.*)

MAJOR (*aside.*)—Aha! Can it be possible? I have my suspicions that I arrived just in the nick of time to prevent a catastrophe. (*aloud.*) Ah, Miss Larrimar, it was a stiff climb I had for these little beauties, and when I did get them my coat caught on a branch of a tree. So it took me longer than I thought it would. But I can now lay the fruits of my labor at your feet.

DICK (*aside, sneeringly.*)—Her dreams, you mean.

MAJOR (*aside.*)—Why doesn't he go? I can't talk to her while he is there. (*aloud, tenderly, as Alice lays flowers carelessly on the seat.*) Does not my unworthy offering find favor at your hands?

DICK (*aside.*)—Things of beauty, man! You forget.

ALICE (*aside.*)—Poor man, he did work so hard to get them, and took such trouble to please me. I must appreciate them. (*aloud.*) They are beautiful, Major, and it was so kind of you to get them for me. Now if I only had something to put them in—Oh! There is a little vase on the table in the library that is just the thing. If I only had that.

MAJOR (*aside.*)—The way to get rid of him! And she has planned it! (*aloud.*) As Mr.—ah—Dick knows the house so much better than I do, perhaps he would—eh?

DICK (*aside.*)—Get something to put his flowers in? I'll just see myself!

ALICE.—Oh, Dick, will you? That would be so kind of you. (*Dick mutters something and runs into the house.*)

MAJOR (*aside.*)—Now is my time. (*aloud.*) Ah, Miss Larrimar, if you would only bestow one of those sweet caresses you lavish so freely on those senseless flowers on the unhappy giver, you would raise him to the highest heaven. (*he kneels.*)

(Dick enters quickly, with vase.)

DICK.—Is this it?

MAJOR *(aside, pretending to pick up something.)*
Confound him. He must have wings.

ALICE.—Oh! have you dropped something, Major?

MAJOR.—Ah, just my ring. I have found it.

ALICE.—It would have been such a pity—Oh, thank you, Dick. *(taking vase and arranging flowers.)* It was so kind of you to get it for me.

DICK.—There was nothing kind about it. *(aside to Alice.)* Alice, have pity on me. Send—

ALICE.—Oh! how stupid of me! There is no water in it, and now they will all have to come out again.

DICK.—Perhaps as the Major has just seen the old well, he will run down and fill it.

ALICE.—Why, Dick, that is half a mile away! You wouldn't have the Major go all the way down there when he can fill it at the duck-pond just around the stable.

DICK *(taking vase from Alice and forcing it into the Major's hand.)*—Yes, that's so. Just follow that path and you will find it.

MAJOR.—Miss Larrimar's wishes must be obeyed. *(he runs out right.)*

ALICE.—But, Dick, the stable is over there! *(pointing left.)*

DICK.—Yes, I know. That's all right. That walk will take him there—in the course of half an hour. Oh, Alice! How can I thank you for sending him away, if only for a moment?

ALICE.—I didn't know you cared so much for—
for flowers. It would be a pity to let them die, wouldn't it?

DICK.—Oh, hang the flowers, so long as I can have you to myself. Oh, Alice, if you would only give me the right to send that fool about his business, instead of loafing around here. Alice, won't you give me an answer to my question? (*he takes her hand. Back to right.*)

ALICE.—Do be careful, Dick. The Major may be back any moment, and he will see you.

DICK.—He is good for some time yet, and anyhow I don't care if he sees or not. He can see that, if he wants to, and that, and that. (*kisses her hand each time.*) I love you, I love you, and—

MAJOR (*running in splashed with water.*)—Here is the water, Miss Larrimar. (*Dick makes a motion as if choking some one.*)

ALICE.—Oh, Major! You are all wet! How did it happen? I am so sorry you have had all this trouble for me.

MAJOR.—It is nothing, I assure you. In hastening to do your bidding, though I saw no stable,

no duck-pond, I found a pump. I am not used to pumps, hence this wetting.

DICK (*aside.*)—Hang the pump! I forgot it.

MAJOR (*aside.*)—Ha, ha! I have outwitted him! He purposely misled me. My blessings on that pump!

ALICE.—There! Isn't that beautiful? Now, if some one would only carry it into the house for me —(*Dick and the Major both rush to get it. Dick gets the flowers and the Major gets the vase.*)

ALICE.—Oh! See what you have done! All my work for nothing! (*enter Mrs. Larrimar and Henry Dawson on porch. Alice meets them at the foot of steps and kisses the latter.*)

MR. DAWSON.—How are you to-day, my dear? It's a pleasure to see your sweet face again.

ALICE.—Then you are very self-denying not to take that pleasure for so long a time. If you had not come here to-day I would have taken my face down to see you.

MR. DAWSON.—And you would have brightened up our lonely house wonderfully, my dear, as you always do. Ah, your house owns the presence of two sweet women. Ours has none at all.

MRS. LARRIMAR.—Henry, let me make you acquainted with Major Saul Bowendale. Major Bowendale, Mr. Dawson, or I should say Colonel Dawson. I always forget that you are a Colonel,

Henry. You never use the title. (*the Major offers to shake hands.*)

MR. DAWSON.—Yes, Kate, I never use it. I fought for my countty, not my title. The war being over, I forget my title. (*to the Major.*) Sir, by what right you hold that honorable title, I do not presume to say. But your offer of the handshake of acquaintanceship I decline.

MRS. LARRIMER—	{	Henry !!
ALICE (<i>at once.</i>)—		Mr. Dawson !!
DICK.—		Father !!

MR. DAWSON.—Yes, my friends, I must decline.

MAJOR (*flourishing vase.*)—Sir, if this is an insult—

MR. DAWSON.—Without intending any insult, I must decline taking your hand.

MAJOR.—Then, sir, my honor demands that I should have satisfaction. Will you—

MR. DAWSON.—I will give your honor my reasons for declining to take your hand, and satisfaction at the same time. I shake hands with no coward. Stay, one moment. Alice, my dear, come here. (*he takes her hand.*) I have not often imposed my experiences in the war upon you, but I am going to tell you one now. Listen then, while I tell you why I cannot take this man's hand. On the night before the battle in which I left this arm, I was called to the bedside of a dying man. He had been wounded the day before in a skirmish

with the enemy, and his wound proved mortal. Why he called on me I cannot say (*Alice kisses his hand*), but I have closed many eyes in death. (*he pauses and sighs.*) He was dying when I arrived. There was no hope, but he wished to send his farewell message to his wife and child. He told me his story as his life was ebbing away. He was not a regular soldier, nor was he a volunteer. He was a substitute. He had sold his life to buy five hundred dollars' worth of miserable existence for his wife and child. He took the chances, but the odds were against him, and he was dying. He was, as I have said, wounded in a skirmish, but it was through the cowardice of one of his comrades at arms. This comrade, to save himself, pushed him to an exposed position. He died at sunrise, this William Barton, but not before he told me the name of the man who killed him. Shall I say the name?

MAJOR.—No, I am he.

MR. DAWSON.—I do not wish to prejudice others against you. Men think differently about these things, but I cannot change my nature.

(*Dick and Alice walk to right.*)

MAJOR.—Sir, I honor your feelings, but you cannot understand mine. I entered upon my military career involuntarily and upon compulsion. My guardian was determined that I should be a soldier, and I am a coward. He resolved that I should be confined to the narrow limits of barrack life, and I

am a poet. He made a will, leaving me his money on condition that I should be a soldier and not a poet. I was watched, hunted by an envious cousin, who claimed my fortune, so I was compelled to enlist, but I could not change my nature. Miss Larrimar, do not let yourself be influenced by the opinions of others. I feel that I am a genius. If I dared but let my soul breathe its natural atmosphere I know that I could grasp the laurel crown. Will you help me gain it and wear it with me?

DICK.—Miss Larrimar deputizes me to be her substitute in this one case, and then receive my discharge. She declines your offer of a laurel crown, and is content to wear one of country flowers that I shall weave for her, for she has promised to be my wife.

MAJOR (*clasping vase to his heart.*)—

Cease heart, hark to thy knell;
It rings for thee—hope farewell.

FINIS.

COLONEL CHABERT.

A DRAMA.

BY

G. I. HOLDSHIP.

50457X¹

Dramatized from the French of

BALZAC.

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BY
G. I. HOLDSHIP.

COLONEL CHABERT.

CHARACTERS.

COLONEL CHABERT.

DERVILLE, *solicitor*.

BOUCARD, *head clerk*.

GODESCHAL, *clerk*.

DELBECQ, *secretary*.

Clerks and paupers.

COUNTESS FERRAUD.

JULIE, *her maid*.

SCENE—Paris and environs.

TIME—Acts I. to IV. inclusive, 1815. Epilogue, 1830.

COLONEL CHABERT.

ACT FIRST.

Study in Derville's house. Time, 1 o'clock in the morning.

Boucard and Godeschal. They work in silence for some time after the rise of the curtain, Boucard arranging documents at the table, Godeschal filing papers in the cabinet from a basket.

BOUCARD.—Why did you put this memorandum in the case of Bodin here? It should not be separated from the brief. Besides, the case does not come up until next week.

GODESCHAL (*crossing over.*)—It was that block-head Hurè. I gave it to him to file this morning after the master had finished. These provincials never listen when one talks to them.

BOUCARD.—Put it in its proper place and reprimand Hurè in the morning. Never let an error pass unnoticed. (*silence for some moments, each at his work. Boucard trims lamp and glances at clock.*)

BOUCARD.—Ten minutes to one! Have you nearly finished? The master will be here in a few moments.

GODESCHAL.—Almost. Where is he to-night?

BOUCARD.—Here is the list of engagements. (*reading.*) “Dine with the Count de Mauris; opera, box of Count Ferraud; the Duchess de Langeais’ ball. Will return at one.”

GODESCHAL.—Count Ferraud! Our client?

BOUCARD.—No, his wife. Decision of Cour d’appel of Nancy, department Ardennes, case of Etienne. File in E. Handsome woman, the Countess. Have you ever seen her?

GODESCHAL.—No. Is she young?

BOUCARD.—Um. Age uncertain, but young looking. Very fascinating though. Count Ferraud is her second husband. She was the widow of an officer of the Empire. (*the clock strikes one. Godeschal leaves cabinet yawning.*)

GODESCHAL.—There! That’s done! I feel sleepy.

BOUCARD.—Was the petition Restaud finished to-day?

GODESCHAL.—Yes, and sent off this afternoon. (*Boucard makes a mark on document.*)

BOUCARD.—Sleepy! You young men are always sleepy. I have three hours’ work yet before me. (*enter Derville briskly in evening dress.*)

DERVILLE.—Have you finished, Godeschal?

GODESCHAL.—Just this moment, sir.

DERVILLE.—Then I would advise you to go to bed at once. You young men need your full quan-

tity of sleep. Take my cloak and hat. (*Godeschal goes out. Derville sits at table.*) Now, Boucard, to work.

BOUCARD.—Case of Countess Ferraud. (*placing documents on table.*) Pleadings in primary court; your instructions; decision of primary court; process in cour d' appel; decision of cour d' appel.

DERVILLE.—We take this case before the court of cassation. Give me the memorandum of our appeal.

(*enter Colonel Chabert at back, noiselessly and unobserved. He stands motionless for some moments, waiting for Derville to finish.*)

BOUCARD (*reaching for another document and observing Chabert.*)—Great heavens! (*to Derville*) I beg your pardon, sir. The gentleman startled me.

(*Derville looks up quickly, moving the lamp shade so as to throw the light on Colonel Chabert's face.*)

DERVILLE.—To whom have I the honor of speaking?

(*Colonel Chabert steps forward, raising his hat. in so doing he moves aside his wig, disclosing a large scar.*)

COLONEL CHABERT.—To Colonel Chabert, monsieur.

DERVILLE.—Colonel Chabert! Cha—Which one?

COLONEL CHABERT.—The one that was killed at Eylau.

DERVILLE.—What is it you wish with me?

COLONEL CHABERT.—A few moments private conversation, monsieur.

(Derville motions Boucard to go. The latter taps his forehead warningly. Derville shrugs his shoulders. Boucard goes out.)

DERVILLE.—Now, sir, I am ready to hear what you have to say. Be as brief and concise as possible. During the day I do not begrudge my time, but at this hour of the night every moment is precious. Therefore, state your case without digression or delay. I will ask for any explanations I may find necessary. Pray be seated. *(he sits down and carelessly turns over the leaves of a brief.)*

COLONEL CHABERT.—Monsieur, you have probably heard my name and know that I commanded a regiment at Eylau, where I was the chief cause of the success of Murat's famous charge. The particulars of the battle are given in "Victories and Conquests," and where also my death is stated as an historic fact. We cut the three Russian lines in two; then they closed behind us and we had to cut our way back again. In returning toward the Emperor, having dispersed the Russians, a troop of the enemy's cavalry met us. I flung myself upon them. Two Russian officers, actual giants, attacked me at one time. One of them struck me with his sabre on the head, cutting through every-

thing, even to the silk cap I wore, and pierced my skull. I fell from my horse. Murat came up to support us, and he and his whole party, fifteen hundred men, rode over me. They reported my death to the Emperor, who sent,—for he loved me a little, the Master—sent to see if there was any hope of saving the man to whom he owed the vigor of our attack. He dispatched two surgeons to find me and carry me to the ambulance, saying hurriedly, perhaps, for he had work to do—"Go and see if my poor Chabert is living." These cursed saw-bones had just seen me trampled under the hoofs of two regiments; no doubt they never took the trouble to feel my pulse, but reported me dead. The certificate of my death was doubtless drawn up in due form, according to military law.

DERVILLE (*who, during the recital, had become more attentive, and had pushed away his papers.*)—Do you know, sir, that I am the solicitor of the Countess Ferraud, widow of Colonel Chabert?

COLONEL CHABERT.—Of my wife? Yes, monsieur. It is for that reason that, after many fruitless efforts to obtain a hearing from other lawyers, I determined to come to you. Let me first state my facts and relate to you how they probably happened. Certain circumstances, known to God Almighty alone, oblige me to relate much in the form of hypotheses. For instance, the wounds I received probably produced something like lockjaw, or threw me into a state similar to a disease called, I believe, catalepsy. Otherwise, how can I sup-

pose it happened that I was stripped of my clothing and thrown into the common trench, according to the customs of war, by the men whose business it is to bury the dead? Here let me state a circumstance I did not know until much later than the event I am forced to call my death. In 1812 I met, in Stuttgart, an old cavalry sergeant of my regiment. That dear man, the only human being willing to recognize me, explained to me the extraordinary circumstances of my preservation. He said that my horse received a bullet the same moment that I myself was wounded. Both horse and rider were therefore knocked over like a stand of muskets. In falling, either to the right or left, I had doubtless been protected by the body of my horse, which saved me from being crushed to death by the cavalry, or hit by bullets. (*he pauses for a few moments.*) When I came to myself, monsieur, I was in a place and in an atmosphere of which I could give you no idea if I talked all night. The little air I had to breathe was mephetic. I wished to move, but found no space. Opening my eyes, I saw nothing. The want of air was the worst sign, and that disclosed to me my true position. I saw that where I was the air was stagnant, and that I should die. This thought overcame the sense of extreme pain that had brought me to myself. My ears hummed violently. I heard, or thought I heard, I do not wish to affirm anything positively, groans from the heaps of dead amongst which I lay. Ah! such groans! Though the recollection of those moments

is dark, though my memory is often confused, in spite of the effect of greater sufferings later which have bewildered my ideas, there are nights when I think I still hear those smothered moans. But there was something more horrible to me than those cries: Silence—a silence I have never felt since—the silence of the grave. It was awful. At last, raising my hands and feeling among the dead, I found a void between my head and the human carion above me. I could measure with my arm the space that had been left me by some chance. It appeared, thanks to the carelessness or haste of those who had thrown us in pell-mell, as if two bodies had fallen against each other above me, so as to form an angle, like that of the two cards two children put together to build houses. Feeling rapidly about, for I could waste no time, I came across a detached arm, the arm of a Hercules, and to that good bone I owe my preservation. Without that unhoped-for aid, I should have perished. But then, with an energy you can well conceive, I began to burrow upwards through the bodies that separated me from the layer of earth that had doubtless been thrown over us; I say “us” as if there had been others living! I worked vigorously, since I am here. But I do not know yet how I was able to pierce that covering of flesh that interposed a barrier between life and me. You may say that I had three arms. That lever, which I used skillfully, brought me a little air confined among the bodies it aided me to displace, and I economized my breathing. At last I saw daylight, but through

the snow, monsieur! Then for the first time I noticed that I was wounded. Luckily my blood, or perhaps that of my comrades or the bleeding flesh of my horse—how can I tell?—had coagulated and formed a natural plaster. Notwithstanding this scab, I fainted when my head came in contact with the snow. Then, the little heat left in my body having melted the snow around me, I found my head, when I regained consciousness, in the centre of a small opening through which I shouted as long as I was able. But the sun was just rising and I had little chance of being heard. Had the people already gone to the fields? I raised myself by a spring from the dead whose thighs were solid—it was not the time to say, “Honor to dead heroes.” In short, monsieur, after going through the anguish, if that word can describe my feelings, of seeing those accursed Germans—oh, heavens! what an eternity it seemed!—of seeing them run away when they heard a voice and could see no one, I was at last taken out by a woman daring enough or curious enough to creep up to my head, which seemed to sprout from the ground like a mushroom. This woman fetched her husband, and together they carried me to their poor hovel. It seems that I had a return of catalepsy—let me use that term to describe a state of which I have no idea, but judging from what my host told me must have been an effect of that disease. I remained there six months, hovering between life and death, speechless at times, delirious at others. Finally they took me to the hospital at Heilsburg. (*he*

pauses for a moment, passing his hand over his forehead.) One day, six months later, having recovered my memory, I told my nurses who I was, that I was Colonel Chabert; they laughed at me. But I do not blame them, for who could recognize a colonel of the Empire in the naked being taken from a trench? Happily for me, the surgeon had made it a point of medical vanity to cure me, and he was naturally interested in me. When I spoke to him of my former life in a rational manner, that good man—his name was Sprachmann, monsieur,—had the evidence of my benefactress recorded in the legal forms of the country, together with his own, as to the nature and position of my wounds, and an exact description of my person.

DERVILLE (*interrupting quickly.*)—Papers! Wise man! Their value is immeasurable to you. You have them here?

COLONEL CHABERT.—Alas, Monsieur, I do not possess a single one. Ever since the day I was hurried from the town by the events of the war, I have wandered like a vagabond, begging my bread, taken for an idiot when I told my story, unable to earn a sou to help me get those papers which alone can prove the truth of what I say and reinstate me in my position. Often my sufferings kept me in some small village for weeks and weeks, where all showed kindness to the sick Frenchman, but they laughed in the face of that same Frenchman when he pretended to be Colonel Chabert. For a long time these doubts, this laughter, threw me into a fury,

and that prejudiced people against me. Once I was shut up as a lunatic at Stuttgart. You can see from what I have told you that there was truly cause to lock me up. After being detained there two years; after hearing a thousand times my keepers explain "This is a poor man who thinks himself Colonel Chabert" to visitors, who replied "Ah, poor man," I gave up, and even became convinced myself of the impossibility of my tale. I became sad and resigned, and tranquil, and ceased to claim Colonel Chabert as my name, so that I might be released and see France once again. Ah, Monsieur, to see France! That was my dream. I—(*he pauses abruptly.*) One fine day, a spring day, they gave me ten thalers and released me, on the ground that I spoke rationally on all subjects and called myself Colonel Chabert no longer. Ah, my God! How I did hate that name! Even now, at intervals, it disgusts me. I would like—would like—not to be myself. The sense of my wrongs kills me. If my illness had only taken from me all memory of my past self, I might be yet happy. I could then have re-entered the ranks under another name, and, who knows, I might have ended as field marshal in Austria or Russia.

DERVILLE.—You have upset all my ideas. I fancy that I dream in listening to you. Let us pause for a few moments, I beg of you.

COLONEL CHABERT.—You are the only person who has ever listened to me patiently. I have told no lawyer as much as I have told you, since they

would not hear me, nor would they lend me ten napoleons so that I could send to Germany for the papers necessary for my suit.

DERVILLE.—Suit ! What suit ?

COLONEL CHABERT.—The Countess Ferraud is still my wife, is she not ? Her income of eighty thousand francs is mine. I gave it to her, yet she refuses me one penny of it. I want my property. That is my suit. When I, a beggar, propose to lawyers to sue a Count and Countess, I, rising unreasonable from the dead, denying even the proofs of my death, they laugh at me, refuse to listen to me. Once I was buried beneath the dead, now I am buried beneath the living, beneath records, beneath facts, beneath society itself, which seeks to thrust me back into my trench.

DERVILLE.—Then let me be the bone to dig you out this time.

COLONEL CHABERT.—Let you be ! Let you ! Ah, that is the first polite word I heard since—*(he weeps.)*

DERVILLE *(taking a roll of money from his pocket.)*—Listen to me. Here are three hundred francs I won at cards to-night. Surely I can afford to give half that amount to save a fellow creature. I shall investigate and take steps to obtain your papers, and until their arrival I will—will advance you five francs a day. If you are Colonel Chabert you will forgive the smallness of the amount. I am a young man who has his fortune yet to make. Continue.

COLONEL CHABERT.—Where was I?

DERVILLE.—At Stuttgart. They had set you free.

COLONEL CHABERT (*after a short pause.*)—You know my wife? (*Derville nods.*) How—what is she like now?

DERVILLE.—Always charming. (*Colonel Chabert's head falls on his arm. Pause.*)

COLONEL CHABERT (*resuming with more cheerfulness.*)—Monsieur, if I had been a handsome man I should not have been where I am. Women believe a good looking man when they interlard their sentences with flattery. How could I make a woman listen to me, with a face like mine, clothed like this, mutilated, an arm wanting? I am more like an Esquimaux than a Frenchman, I, Colonel Chabert, Count of the Empire, the handsomest man of his time! Or if I had had relatives of my own this would not have happened. But I was a foundling, a soldier whose only patrimony was his courage, the world his family, France his country, God his only protector—no, I am wrong. I had a father, the Emperor. Ah! If he were only still amongst us! (*pause.*) I wrote a long and detailed letter to my wife, but received no reply. Then I set out for Paris. Ah, Monsieur, there would be no end to my tale if I were to relate all the sufferings and misfortunes of that journey. Suffice it to say that at last I reached Paris, penniless, hungry, my clothes literally in shreds. That same night I was

forced to bivouac in the woods of Clave. The chilliness of the night gave me some sort of an illness, I do not know what it was, that seized me as I was crossing the faubourg St. Martin. When I came to my senses I was in a bed in the Hôtel Dieu. There I remained for a month, almost happy. Then I was discharged, penniless, but cured, and on the pavements of Paris! With what joy and speed I made my way to the rue du Mont Blanc, where, as I supposed, my wife was living in my house. Bah! the rue du Mont Blanc had become the rue de la Chaussée-d'Antin, my house sold, torn down, houses built by speculators in my gardens. Not knowing that my wife had married Count Ferraud, I could obtain no information about her. Finally I went to my old lawyer, but I found that he was dead and his office had passed into the hands of a younger man. The latter informed me, to my great astonishment, of the settlement of my estate, the marriage of my wife, and the birth of her two children. Then, Monsieur, knowing where my wife lived, I made my way to the house. Ah, I was not admitted when I gave an assumed name, but the day I gave my own I was thrown out. I have stood there night after night to see her returning from some ball or the theatre, to see the woman who is mine, yet who denies me. From that day I have lived for vengeance. She knows I am living. She has received four letters from me, one since my return to Paris. She loves me no longer, and I—I do not know if I love her or hate

her. Sometimes I think I love her yet, and sometimes I curse her.

DERVILLE.—This is a serious matter. Even if we admit the authenticity of the papers at Heilsburg, I am not sure that we can succeed, certainly not at once. The case is so exceptional.

COLONEL CHABERT.—Oh, if I fail, I can die—but not alone.

DERVILLE (*pushing paper before Colonel Chabert.*)—Write me here an exact description of the papers, and give the precise name of the town, country and the person in whose hands they were left. (*Colonel Chabert writes. When he has finished.*) Now, you will, I hope, follow my counsel. Your case shall be mine, and you will soon see, I hope, the interest I take in your situation, which is almost without precedent in legal annals. I shall make every effort possible, and if we are forced to compromise—

COLONEL CHABERT. — Compromise ! Compromise ! Am I living or am I dead ?

END OF ACT I.

ACT SECOND.

Boudoir of Countess Ferraud.

(enter Julie with letter in her hand.)

JULIE.—Great heavens! what shall I do? Madame will never forgive—in my pocket for four days—no excuse to offer! *(she throws it on the table, wringing her hands.)* Fiend! Monster! *(shaking her fist at it.)* To get me in such a fix! I shall be discharged, sent off without a character *(weeping.)* I wonder who it is from? *(takes up letter and examines address.)* What! Another! Like the others that put Madame in such a rage! This makes the fourth. So much the worse for you, my dear, her rage will fall on you. My, wouldn't I just like to know what's in it! How Madame did rage when the first one came!

COUNTESS *(outside.)*—Remove those flowers, Alphonse.

JULIE.—Heavens! Madame! *(she seizes letter and silver tray, and meets Countess at the door.)*
(enter Countess.)

COUNTESS.—Well?

JULIE.—Madame, pardon—I—a letter—

COUNTESS.—So I see. What then? You are not usually so embarrassed when handing me a letter.

JULIE.—It is that I have to crave pardon of Madame la Comtesse for my negligence in forgetting to deliver this before.

COUNTESS (*taking letter and starting.*)—Girl, how long have you had this? Ah! (*running towards light and examining seal.*) Have you opened this?

JULIE.—Madame! No, Madame.

COUNTESS (*seizing her by the arm.*)—Look at me girl. Are you sure?

JULIE.—Yes, Madame. By my faith I have not.

COUNTESS (*releasing her.*)—It is well for you. Go.

JULIE.—I hope Madame will pardon—

COUNTESS.—Go. Go.

(*Julie goes out.*)

COUNTESS.—Another! Am I never to escape this nightmare? He dogs my footsteps night and day. If I go to a ball, to the opera, he is there to watch me drive away, his eyes burning into mine, but from love or hate I do not know, cannot tell. Love! What cause have we to love each other? I hate him and I fear him. Yet what can he prove? Legally he is dead. I made sure of that before I married again. He can do nothing. (*she paces up and down.*) Pshaw! Why deceive myself! He can ruin me, ruin me, not by law, but through Count Ferraud. Yes, it is true. I have lately been forced to realize it. Though he loves me, yet I am not of use to him. I brought him money, but not influence, and it is influence that he needs. If he had married in the family of a peer

of France, he would have had family influence, the only power with the King. His ancient name, combined with—No, I cannot contend against Chabert, proofless though he is. Yet I will not resign the position I have gained. Chabert must remain dead, legally if not—if not—Could it be done? A body in the river, the morgue—why not? I have done worse before. No, I dare not risk it. I can have no confidants. I must work alone. But how, how? Can I influence him to efface himself, not to claim his proper position? Yes, if he loves me. Loves me! He has more cause to hate me than I him. Yet it is Chabert. Another, impossible, Chabert—I must find out, I must see if—Ah, his letter. (*she hastily tears it open and reads.*) Ah, the same old story. (*pause.*) Yes, I saw you. (*pause.*) If you had only done it! On the edge and no one there to push you over. (*pause.*) Pity! I! I have none. (*pause.*) Pshaw! this tells me nothing. It is the same as the others. Money, money, pity, pity. It is always the same. I must see him. I can then tell what chances are against me. But he cannot come here. The servants are curious; that girl suspects something. Where then?

(*enter Julie, and later Derville.*)

JULIE.—Monsieur Derville desires to speak with Madame.

COUNTESS.—Admit him. I will see him here. (*Julie goes out.*) Could I make use of him? No, he is too keen. He would discover too much.

Well, he will distract my mind, even if it is only about that tiresome suit.

JULIE.—Monsieur Derville.

COUNTESS.—Ah, good morning, lawyer. Leave us, Julie. (*Julie goes out.*) Have you come to talk to me about my suit?

DERVILLE.—No, Madame. I have come to talk on a more serious subject.

COUNTESS.—Oh, I am so sorry the Count is absent.

DERVILLE.—And I am glad, Madame, for he would be out of place here just now. Besides, Delbecq had told me that you prefer to attend to business yourself without annoying the Count.

COUNTESS.—Very well. Shall I call Delbecq?

DERVILLE.—His presence could be of no advantage to you, clever as he is. Listen to me more seriously, Madame, for the subject is a serious one to you. (*he pauses for a moment, watching her attentively.*) Colonel Chabert is alive.

COUNTESS (*starting, then laughing.*)—Do you expect me to listen to you seriously when you talk such nonsense as that? (*Derville does not take his eyes from her face. She ceases laughing suddenly.*)

DERVILLE.—Madame, I think that you do not realize the danger of your position. I need hardly tell you that Colonel Chabert has in his possession documents of undeniable authenticity, and that

positive proof can be brought as to his existence. Furthermore, you know that I am not a man to undertake a hopeless case. I have undertaken his.

COUNTESS.—It is a vile imposture! An attempt to extort money from me! Bring suit, if you dare! I shall oppose your every step. I—

DERVILLE.—If you oppose our first step, namely, to prove the falsity of the death record, you will lose the suit before the primary court, and that once decided in our favor, you will have no ground to stand upon. Am I not right?

COUNTESS.—I cannot judge until I see the papers. What is your object in seeing me to-day? What do you want?

DERVILLE.—I want to talk to you calmly and quietly, but neither of the Colonel nor of you. I shall not even speak of the uses a clever lawyer, in possession of the facts of the case, might put his knowledge, nor the role he could play with the letters you received from your husband before you married Count Ferraud.

COUNTESS.—I have received no letters from any Colonel Chabert, and if anyone claims to be the Colonel, he is a swindler, some galley-slave, perhaps, like Cogniard. The mere thought makes me shudder. How could the Colonel come to life? Bonaparte himself sent me his condolences by an aid-de-camp, and I now draw a pension of three thousand francs granted the widow by the Cham-

bres. I have every right to reject all Chaberts past and to come.

DERVILLE.—Happily, we are alone, Madame. We may lie without fear. (*he shrugs his shoulders and says abruptly*) The proof that Colonel Chabert's first letter reached you, is that as it contained a draft on you and—

COUNTESS.—A draft! It contained no draft!

DERVILLE (*turning towards her and smiling.*)—You received one letter then, Madame? See, now, you are caught in the first trap a lawyer lays for you, yet you think you can fight against justice. (*she covers her face with her hands for a moment. Then coolly.*)

COUNTESS.—As you are the lawyer of the impostor Chabert, be so kind as to—

DERVILLE.—Madame, at this moment I am your lawyer as well as the Colonel's. Do you believe I wish to lose a client as valuable as yourself? But you do not listen.

COUNTESS.—Continue, sir.

DERVILLE.—Let us speak plainly. I will show you why I am your lawyer even if I have undertaken the other side also. Let me review the facts. You received your fortune from Colonel Chabert, and now you repulse him in his need. You are rich, immensely rich, yet your husband begs. Ah, Madame, Madame, a lawyer could be very eloquent on that subject, a subject that is itself eloquent.

He could bring tears to the eyes of the judge himself. He could do more than that; he could turn public opinion against you.

COUNTESS.—Ah, you rely, I see, upon touching the hearts of the judges. But even if I were to admit the existence of your Colonel Chabert, the tribunaux will sustain my second marriage because of my children, and I myself freed by paying the Colonel two hundred and twenty-five thousand francs.

DERVILLE.—Madame, you can never tell how the tribunaux will decide a question of mere sentiment. Look you, if on the one hand we have a mother and her children, on the other we have a man overwhelmed by misfortune, aged before his time, and penniless through you. Decided in your favor, you would yet have a husband, a home. But he, where would he find a home? Then there is a point on which the law is explicit. Your marriage with Colonel Chabert has not been annulled; you are still his wife. Furthermore, if, in painting these scenes, the slightest odium attaches itself to you, another adversary may be raised up against you, one you have not foreseen. That, Madame, is the danger from which I would save you.

COUNTESS.—A new adversary! Who?

DERVILLE.—Count Ferraud, Madame.

COUNTESS.—Count Ferraud has a deep affection for me, and he would—

DERVILLE.—To a lawyer accustomed to read be-

tween the lines, this is mere nonsense. Do not misunderstand me. Count Ferraud has, at this moment, not the slightest desire, nor even the thought, to break your marriage, and I am sure he adores you. But, were he told that his marriage could be annulled, that his wife was to be brought as a criminal before the bar of public opinion—

COUNTESS.—He would defend me, sir.

DERVILLE.—No, Madame, he would not.

COUNTESS.—Your reason.

DERVILLE.—Simply because his marriage with you annulled, he could marry the only child of some peer of France, whose title would descend to him.

(the Countess sinks into the chair.)

DERVILLE *(aside.)*—I have her. *(aloud.)* You would not be so badly off, madame, if that were the case. A man covered with glorious achievements, a general, a Count, a grand officer of the Légion d' honneur. That would not be such a bad exchange, if—he would have you.

COUNTESS.—Oh, enough, enough. Spare me. You have conquered. I can have no other lawyer but you. *(she covers her face with her hands.)* What must I do?

DERVILLE.—Compromise.

(the Countess rises and walks hastily up and down. Then pausing.)

COUNTESS.—Does he love me yet?

DERVILLE.—Unfortunately, yes.

(the Countess resumes her walk, thoughtfully.)

COUNTESS—Oh, I cannot decide at once. I cannot give you a definite answer to-day. I must think. You have given me much to ponder on.

DERVILLE.—I trust I have shown you the weakness of your position, and—

COUNTESS.—Yes, my friend, I was misled by circumstances that you will appreciate, and you have opened my eyes. I no longer think as I did, and I see that my course must be totally different from what I intended. I thank you, my friend, and must consult you further as to how best to arrange this for the best of all. Can I not see your other client? Not here, though.

DERVILLE.—Colonel Chabert? Why, as to that—unless at my office—you know he is not lodged like a prince.

COUNTESS.—The very place. To-morrow at, say, ten?

DERVILLE.—Very well. I will arrange with Colonel Chabert.

COUNTESS.—Ah, Monsieur Derville, I am but a weak woman after all. How weak, your arguments have shown me. I am quite unnerved.

DERVILLE.—Then, Madame, with your permission I shall take my leave. *(aside, as he goes out.)*

What scheme has she now? Too humble, my lady, to deceive me.

(exit Derville.)

COUNTESS *(laughing softly.)*—Oh, wise young man! You have, indeed, changed my plans. Instead of showing me the weakness of my position, you have given me the keynote of my strength. *(pause.)* Poor Chabert! He is much changed. He was a handsome man. *(pause.)* He loves me yet! Yes, he loved me well in those old days, and I—*(she shrugs her shoulders.)* He was an able man, too. From an unknown foundling to a Count. I did well to retain him, penniless and nameless though he was. Now I am a Countess, wealthy, courted. Then—*(she shudders.)* No more of that! Let that past remain buried. *(she rises, resuming her walk.)* If Chabert will accede to my wishes and remain dead, all will be well. He must consent. *(pause. Then she goes to mirror and examines her reflection. Then smiling triumphantly.)* By the love he still has for me I will conquer him.

END OF ACT SECOND.

ACT THIRD.

Derville's office. Time, 9 A. M.

Private office in front, general office at left-back, door at right-back, leading to another room. When the curtain rises the clerks are in the general office at work, Godeschal dictating, and Boucard in private office writing at table.

GODESCHAL.—“But in his exalted and beneficent wisdom”—comma—“his majesty, Louis the eighteenth”—put that all in letters—“the moment he resumed the reins of power”—comma—“understood”—Oh, what did the fat joker understand?—“understood the high mission to which he had been called by divine Providence”—exclamation point and a dash; they are pious enough at the Palais Royal to let that pass—“And his first thought”—comma—“as is proved by the date of the ordinance hereinafter named”—comma—“was to repair the evils caused by the frightful and bloody disasters of our revolutionary times”—comma—“by restoring to his faithful and numerous adherents”—numerous is a fine piece of flattery, and should please the tribunal—“all their unsold property”—comma—“whether it be now included in the public domain”—comma—“in the ordinary or extraordinary crown domains”—comma—“or in the gifts to public institutions”—dot your i's and cross your t's.

1ST CLERK.—T's.

GODESCHAL.—Eh! What is that? What have you written?

2D CLERK.—He has written, “Or in the gifts to public institutions dot your eyes and cross your teas,” spelling them e-y-e-s and t-e-a-s. (*all laugh.*)

GODESCHAL.—How is this, Huré? Do you think that eyes and teas are law terms?

BOUCARD.—Come, come! Not so much noise there. You have made me lose my count. Besides the master will be here in a few moments.

GODESCHAL.—Erase that carefully, Huré. Here, let me see it. Heavens! What have you done? (*reading.*) “But in his exalted and benevolent wisdom comma his majesty Louis the eighteenth put that all in letters”—Good Lord!—“the moment he recovered the rains”—r-a-i-n-s—“of power comma understood what did the fat joker understand”—Heavens and earth! This is enough to get the master disbarred. This is horrible. Here, take a fresh sheet of paper, and re-write this. If the master should see this, goodby to you. There, I will wait until you catch up. (*enter Derville through general office.*)

DERVILLE.—Good morning, gentlemen.

CLERKS.—Good morning, sir.

(*Derville enters private office and seats himself at desk, opening and reading letters. Enter Colonel Chabert in general office.*)

COLONEL CHABERT.—Monsieur Derville, is he in?

GODESCHAL.—He has just arrived. I will see if—

COLONEL CHABERT.—I come by appointment.

GODESCHAL.—In that case enter, sir.

(Colonel Chabert enters private office.)

DERVILLE.—Ah, good morning, Count. You are prompt. Leave us, Boucard. *(Boucard goes out, closing the doors.)*

COLONEL CHABERT.—A poor man cannot afford to be late, monsieur.

DERVILLE.—Well, well, we shall have time to talk over our affairs before the Countess arrives. But, Colonel, how well you look to-day. You are another man.

COLONEL CHABERT.—Monsieur, you have given me hope.

DERVILLE.—Then, truly, it is a sovereign cure. But be seated and let us talk. I received your papers from Heilsburg some days ago, and found them as you had stated. I also received an additional letter from the surgeon of the hospital in which he states that the woman who saved you still lives.

COLONEL CHABERT.—And I have no money.

DERVILLE.—Colonel, I will not conceal from you that, notwithstanding the fact that your papers are at hand, your case is excessively complicated.

COLONEL CHABERT.—It is very simple, it seems to me. You all thought me dead. Well, here I am. Then give me back my wife and my fortune;

give me the rank of General, to which I have a right, for I had passed Colonel the night before the battle of Eylau.

DERVILLE.—Ah, things are not done that way in law. Listen. You are Count Chabert, I admit, but to prove it legally to those whose interest it is to deny your existence—that is another matter. All your papers will be disputed, and each challenge will open up a dozen or more preliminary questions. Each step will be fought to the Supreme Court, and will involve expensive suits that will drag along however much I push them. Your adversaries will demand an inquiry, which we shall not be able to deny, and which will necessitate, perhaps, sending a commission to Prussia. But even supposing the most favorable circumstances, that you are recognized as Colonel Chabert, do we know how the question arising from the innocent bigamy of the Countess will be decided? In this the point of law is outside the code, and can be judged only by the law of conscience, as the juries often do in cases of social perversities brought up in criminal trials. Now, you had no children, while Count Ferraud had two. There lies the point. The judges can annul a marriage like yours in favor of Count Ferraud, in order to further the welfare of the children, always supposing, of course, that the parents married in good faith. The case has many elements of duration. You may grow old before it does, struggling with the sharpest anxieties.

COLONEL CHABERT.—But my property?

DERVILLE.—You think that you have a large fortune?

COLONEL CHABERT.—Have I not an income of eighty thousand francs?

DERVILLE.—My dear Colonel, anticipating that question, I have investigated the matter. Here, then, is the state of the property. You made, in 1799, before your marriage, a will leaving a quarter of your whole property to the hospitals.

COLONEL CHABERT.—True.

DERVILLE.—Well, when you were dead, was not an inventory necessary in order to settle the estate and give this quarter to the hospitals? Yes, the estate was settled, and your wife did not scruple to cheat the poor. This inventory, in which she took care not to mention the money on hand, the jewelry and but little of the silver, and in which the furniture was appraised at two-thirds the full value, either to please her or to lessen the tax, the appraisers being liable to the amount of their valuations, this inventory gave your property as amounting to six hundred thousand francs. Your widow had a dower right to half. Everything was sold and bought in by her, she making by the transaction, and the hospitals got their seventy-five thousand francs. The state inheriting the remainder, the Emperor by a decree, you not having mentioned your wife in your will, returned to the widow that

portion. Now, to what have you any right? To three hundred thousand francs, less costs.

COLONEL CHABERT.—Do you call that justice?

DERVILLE.—It is the law.

COLONEL CHABERT.—Fine law, that.

DERVILLE.—But it is so, my poor Colonel. You see now what you thought so simple and easy is not so at all. And Madame Ferraud may also try to retain what the Emperor gave her.

COLONEL CHABERT.—But she is not a widow and the decree is null.

DERVILLE.—I admit that, but everything can be argued. Listen. In these circumstances I think that a compromise is the best thing for all parties. You would gain a larger fortune that way than by asserting your rights.

COLONEL CHABERT.—It would be selling my wife.

DERVILLE.—With an income of twenty-four thousand francs you could choose another who would suit you better and make you happier. Believe me, this is safest.

COLONEL CHABERT.—Do you think I could win my case?

DERVILLE.—Perhaps. To all appearances, yes. But, my dear Colonel Chabert, there is one point you do not remember. I am not rich and my practice is not entirely paid for. If the courts would be

willing to grant you a provisional maintenance, that is an advance on your property, they would do so only after having recognized your claims as Colonel Chabert, Grand Officer of the Légion d'Honneur.

COLONEL CHABERT.—True. I am Grand Officer of the Légion d'Honneur. I had forgotten that.

DERVILLE.—Well, to continue. To get them to do that you will have to bring suits, pay lawyers, employ sheriffs and—live. The cost of these preliminary steps will amount, at a rough estimate, to twelve or fifteen thousand francs. I have not that amount to lend you, for I am already burdened by the enormous interest I have to pay. Where, then, will you get it?

COLONEL CHABERT.—I will go to the column of the Vendôme and cry out, I am Colonel Chabert, who broke the Russian square at Eylau. The statue itself would recognize me.

DERVILLE.—And they would imprison you as mad.

COLONEL CHABERT.—Perhaps I would stand a better chance at the war office.

DERVILLE.—A government office! The last place possible. The government would prefer getting rid of the Empire people.

COLONEL CHABERT.—Ah, there is no place here in this world for me.

DERVILLE.—Courage, my friend. Courage. We shall bring this case to a happy ending yet. But you must give me your entire confidence, and place yourself blindly in my hands.

COLONEL CHABERT.—Well, do as you wish with me.

DERVILLE.—Then I am your general, you my regiment ready to march to death.

COLONEL CHABERT.—Good. But must I live without a name, without station? That would be horrible.

DERVILLE.—Certainly not. We will bring an amicable suit to annul the record of your death, and also your marriage, so that you may resume your place in society. You might even be restored to your place in the army, or by Count Ferraud's influence raised to the rank of General, and you would doubtless get a pension.

COLONEL CHABERT.—Well, then, so be it. I trust myself entirely to you.

DERVILLE.—Then sign this power of attorney. (*placing document before Chabert, who signs.*) Now, Colonel, pray attend carefully to this. Do not have any communication with your wife. If she seeks you, avoid her, and under no circumstances sign any document or paper at her solicitation or at the solicitation of any person, except in my presence. This is important. Courage, my friend. I see good fortune yet in store for you. Do you need money?

COLONEL CHABERT. — My needs are supplied through your generosity. I should like to reward—but no matter. I must wait until I get my rights.

DERVILLE. — Ah, a carriage. Countess Ferraud comes. Now, Colonel, I must speak with her alone before you meet. Will you have the kindness to enter there? (*Chabert goes out.*)

DERVILLE. — So far, good. But the Countess is another matter. I must discover what scheme she has.

GODESCHAL (*entering from general office.*) — A lady to see you, sir.

DERVILLE. — Admit her. (*enter Countess Ferraud veiled.*) Leave us, Godeschal. (*Godeschal goes out.*)

(*Countess Ferraud removes veil. Derville places chair for her.*)

DERVILLE. — Madame, before your interview with Colonel Chabert, it would be best to submit to you, I think, the articles of agreement, so that I may obtain your opinion of them before considering them with him. While I am indebted to Colonel Chabert for many points that will appear, he has not yet seen the agreement nor heard its terms. It is at present merely a rough draft, consequently I will, with your permission, read it to you.

COUNTESS. — Proceed, sir. I am listening.

DERVILLE (*reading.*)—"Articles of agreement made this blank day of blank between the undersigned, Paul Hyacinthe, alias Chabert, Count, Major-General and Grand Officer of the Légion d' Honneur, of the rue du Petit Banquier, Paris, of the first part, and Rose Chapotel, wife of Count Chabert, the above-named, daughter of—

COUNTESS.—Enough, enough. Let us omit the preamble and consider the conditions.

DERVILLE.—Madame, this preamble is absolutely necessary, and furthermore it explains succinctly the position of the subscribers. However, since you wish it, I will omit reading it. Here then are the conditions. First, that you recognize in the presence of three witnesses, who are to be two notaries and the cowkeeper with whom your husband has lived and to whom I have confided the facts of the case under promise of secrecy, that you recognize, as I say, that the individual named herein, but whose identity is elsewhere proved in an affidavit prepared by Alexander Crotat, your notary, to be Count Chabert, your first husband. Second, that Count Chabert will agree to make no use of his rights as your husband, except as may be hereinafter noted in another clause, which is as to the non-fulfillment of the terms of this agreement. Third, that Count Chabert will agree to sue with you for an amicable decree to annul the record of his death, and to dissolve his marriage with you.

COUNTESS.—But that does not suit me at all. I do not want to go to law. You know why.

(enter Chabert at back, unperceived.)

DERVILLE.—Fourth, that you will secure to Count Chabert, under the name of Paul Hyacinthe, a contingent annuity of twenty-four thousand francs, to be in public funds, the same to revert to you upon his death, and—

COUNTESS.—But that is far too dear!

DERVILLE.—Did you think that you could compromise for less?

COUNTESS.—That is too much.

DERVILLE.—What, then, do you want, Madame?

COUNTESS.—I want—I—I do not want to go to law. I want—

DERVILLE.—Him to remain dead.

COUNTESS.—Well, sir, if he must have twenty-four thousand francs income, I will risk a suit. It is extortion and I will not submit. I will demand justice. I will—

COLONEL CHABERT. — Yes, justice. *(coming forward, pointing to his empty sleeve.)*

COUNTESS *(aside.)*—It is he!

COLONEL CHABERT.—Too dear! too dear! And I gave you almost a million. So! you would trade upon my misfortunes, haggle about a pittance that I consented to beg of you like a pauper, so that you would not have to blush before the world of fashion you have reached. Too dear! And I, what do I pay for this love I have borne for you

even when you closed your doors to me while I was starving in the streets of Paris? To be nameless, homeless, friendless, unknown! I did not consider these too dear! All I asked of you was enough to keep me from hunger and to pay my debts. It is too dear. Well, then, I will take all. I gave you your fortune, I will take it back again, and you too. You are my wife.

COUNTESS.—But Monsieur is not Colonel Chabert?

COLONEL CHABERT.—Ah! Do you wish proofs? In those old days I was not so particular. I was a foundling, but you, what were you? Before I met you I know not what you were, but I took you from the pavements of the Palais Royal. Ah! you remember? Shall I continue? Shall I tell who you were with and what became of him? Ah! Yes. I know that secret too. Am I not Chabert?

END OF ACT THIRD.

ACT FOURTH.

Country residence of Count Ferraud at Groslay. Library in same, with windows opening upon veranda, and showing lawn and park. Afternoon.

(enter Chabert and Delbecq.)

COLONEL CHABERT.—For the hundredth time I ask you, Monsieur, where do you take me? What do you wish with me? You take me in your carriage, drive me away from the city, and offer me no explanations! We arrive here, and still no answer to my questions. I now demand a reply. Speak, Monsieur.

DELBECQ.—Pray have patience, my dear sir. I intend you no harm, rather to do you good. I am acting merely upon the instructions I have received from another, who will give you all explanations, will answer all the questions you have put to me. With your permission I will now announce your arrival. *(Delbecq goes out.)*

COLONEL CHABERT.—With my permission! Faith, the world must be tired of giving me curses and is going to kill me with politeness. But who is this other that causes me to be carried here? An intrigue? Bah! Chabert of the Restoration is not like Chabert of the Empire. An old friend who has recognized me? Ah, I would not have recognized myself, and then friends of prosperity are not always friends of adversity. Who then? Well, no matter. I shall soon find out. *(he in-*

spects room.) Faith, they live well here and have good taste. Good, that pleases me. The effect is good. *(he looks out of window.)* By Mars! what a place for a battle! That would please the Emperor. Ah, Saint Helena! Saint Helena! *(he continues his examination of the room, and stops before the portrait of two children.)* Ah, if I had had children! They would have recognized me, changed as I am. They would not have refused me a crust of bread. They would not have treated me so infamously. *(he seats himself and rests his head in his hands, in deep thought.)*

(enter Countess and Delbecq at side.)

COUNTRESS *(aside.)*—It is he. Good. Did he come willingly?

DELBECQ *(aside.)*—Perfectly.

COUNTRESS *(aside.)*—And you told him nothing?

DELBECQ *(aside.)*—Nothing.

COUNTRESS *(aside.)*—Good. Now leave us. Have the papers you have prepared at hand. I will call you in a few moments.

(Delbecq goes out.)

(Countess approaches Chabert and places her hand on his arm.)

COUNTRESS.—Paul.

(silence for some moments, he gazing at her wonderingly.)

COUNTESS.—Paul, I knew you the moment I saw you.

COLONEL CHABERT.—Rosine!

COUNTESS.—Yes, Paul, I knew you. Though it has been years since I last saw you, though every feature of your face has changed, the moment I saw you and heard your voice, I knew you.

COLONEL CHABERT.—Yet you denied me, Rosine!

COUNTESS.—Yes, I denied you. Ah, Paul, in the many years since we parted, have *you* changed, too, as well as your appearance? The old Chabert would not have said that, would not have reproached me with that denial. Yes, I did deny you. Can you wonder at it? Could you not see what it must have cost me to appear as I did before a stranger? How could I do anything else but act a part, with that lawyer's eyes upon me, waiting to see me humbled, trying to read my thoughts in my agitation? Think, think what a false position must mine have been, and what would have been my shame to be compelled to acknowledge it. If I am to blush for myself, abase myself, let it be before you alone. See, now I deny nothing, conceal nothing. I lay open my heart to you. You *are* Count Chabert. You *are* my husband.

COLONEL CHABERT—Oh, Rosine, Rosine! Those words give me life. I forget my misfortunes, my sufferings.

COUNTESS.—Yes, you have suffered much. But I, have I not suffered too? What am I? A widow,

yet my husband lives; married, yet he whom I married is not my husband. Though innocent, I am a criminal. Paul, be just to me. You think that I have been hard, cruel to you. Can you blame me for my indifference to the tale of misfortunes of a Chabert in whose existence I had no reason, no cause to believe? Oh, I know what you would say. Yes, I received your letters, but what did they prove to me? They reached me three months after the battle of Eylau, three long months after you had been killed and buried. If it had been really Chabert why had he not written to his wife before? Then the condition of the letters themselves; they were opened, soiled, hardly legible, in nothing like you. How could I believe you to be other than an impostor? Why should I think that Napoleon had been deceived? He had seen you fall in battle; had seen a thousand horsemen ride over your body; had sent his surgeons to see your corpse. Then he sent an *aid-de-campe* to tell me the tidings, the story of your death, condoling with me for my loss of a dear husband, and his loss of a brave soldier. They showed me the certificate of your burial; the journals were filled with regrets for your untimely end. What right had I to suppose that all were wrong? I could not think them so, could not think otherwise than that you were an impostor, one who had heard the story of my loss—for who had not heard it?—and had conceived the frightful idea of trading on my grief. I did believe this, and thinking so it was necessary for me to take precautions to meet your attacks. I

could not ask aid from Count Ferraud. I could not tell him how cruelly I was beset, yet I had to protect myself and him. Was I not right in doing this.

COLONEL CHABERT.—Yes, you were right and I was mad not to foresee this. Rosine, I have wronged you. I have thought too harshly of you.

COUNTESS.—Ah, my friend, on what little things do our lives often depend! Is it not horrible to look back and realize that what seemed to us then so small, so unimportant, so easily avoided, was in reality a momentous event, deciding irrevocably our whole after life? If you had told me your whole story in your first letter, giving it but the appearance of reality so that I might have doubted in the least degree the weight of the evidence against you, how different would have been our lives! Or if I had had courage to tell others of that letter, clumsy imposture as I thought it was, it would have been investigated. Either would have been so easy, you to have been more frank, I to overcome my pride. But we did neither. You stated merely that you were alive and asked for money, and I concealed the letter. But no more of this. Regrets will avail us nothing. The evil has been done. Can we repair it? What is best for us to do? This is what we must consider and consult about. It is for this I brought you here, to my country place near Groslay. Here we can be alone, without fear of interruption, for we must decide this question for ourselves, must we not? We

do not wish to become the talk of Paris. To a man that would matter but little, but to a woman, to me, it is everything. The talk, the scandal, that would be horrible; but the odium, the ridicule that would be ours, that would be worse. We must preserve our dignity. (*she touches the blue ribbon on his coat.*) That must not be dishonored.

COLONEL CHABERT.—You are right. Anything but that.

COUNTESS.—Yet how are we to decide? What can we take to guide us? Can we be guided by the same things? Shall we take the law, that calm, impassive logic, reasoning from a cause to an effect, that Juggernaut grinding feelings, affections, moral duties beneath its resistless power? You have a right to this, but I, can I mistake my duty? The law says I am your wife, that I had no right to marry again. But you died to me. Was I not then free to form other ties? And are these new ties to be broken, cut asunder because of a mistake that no man could have foreseen? Oh, Paul, you are my judge, the one and only arbiter of my fate. In your hands lie the power. Be generous to me. Ah, you feel for me. Something tells me I may hope in your mercy, trust in the nobleness of your nature. You will not blast the lives of those who love me.

COLONEL CHABERT (*after a few moments' silence.*)—Rosine.

COUNTESS.—Yes, Paul?

COLONEL CHABERT.—The dead should never return to earth.

COUNTESS.—Oh, no, no, Paul. Do not say that. Believe me, I am not selfish and ungrateful. If I were alone, there would be no question, no hesitation. But I am not alone. And, Paul, I will hide nothing from you. Count Ferraud loves me and I—I love him. Ah, did I not believe myself free to love him? When you died I was alone, I had no friends, no relative, nothing to live for. I was not a mother.

COLONEL CHABERT (*looking at portrait.*)—Are these your children?

COUNTESS.—Yes.

COLONEL CHABERT (*regarding it sadly for awhile, then looks around the room as if in search for something.*)—And where is his—the other?

COUNTESS.—My husband—I mean—I—how shall I speak of Count Ferraud?

COLONEL CHABERT.—Call him your husband, my poor child.

COUNTESS.—I have no portrait of him here.

(*Chabert turns again to the portrait. His lips move as if speaking to himself.*)

COLONEL CHABERT.—It is only just, I must return to my grave. My dear, I have decided. Rest tranquil in your present home. I am the one to make the sacrifice.

COUNTESS.—Oh, Paul, what can I say to you? How can I let you do this? You have suffered so much, borne so much, and I have been the innocent cause of many of your trials. You should hate me, trample on me.

COLONEL CHABERT.—I love you.

COUNTESS.—How can I let you do it?

COLONEL CHABERT (*pointing to portrait*).—For their sake. They are innocent of all wrong. And, my child, I do not blame you now. Once I thought you hated me for coming to life again; that you knew I was alive and that you knowingly and intentionally denied my existence. But that is past. You are innocent of all wrong, your children are innocent, your husband is innocent. And God knows I, too, am innocent. Oh, life, life! What a poor muddle you are! If that Russian had only been a little stronger, all would have been well. But we must not sacrifice four lives for one. I will renounce my name, my station,—you. Well, what matters it! A few years more or less and the comedy will be over. I am indeed an old man.

COUNTESS.—But to do this authentically—

COLONEL CHABERT.—Authentically! Will not my word suffice? But, no, no, my child. I do not mean that. Since it is to be done, let it be done well. Draw up your papers and let me sign them. All I ask is enough to live on and to reward those who have been kind to me.

COUNTESS.—I will send my secretary to you and you can talk it over together. He has, I believe, drawn up a paper—

COLONEL CHABERT.—Ah! It is already drawn up! You were confident.

COUNTESS.—Did I not know you were Chabert? *(she kisses him and goes out.)*

COLONEL CHABERT.—Alas! Poor ghost! Poor, useless ghost! It is time for you to return to your grave. Yet it must be so. I have often thought that my only hope, and now everything warns me that I am not wanted. Not to be wanted! To find no resting place but in the grave! I have grown old, old, old, and I have not realized it. Life has swept beyond me while I was held in my tomb, and left me stranded, flotsam of days gone by. France has no need of me, no place for me. Well, let it be so.

(enter Delbecq.)

DELBECQ *(placing papers on table.)*—I trust that you are not still angry with me?

COLONEL CHABERT.—Ah, my captor. No ill-will, my friend. So, you are secretary to Countess Ferraud?

DELBECQ.—Yes, Colonel, I have that honor.

COLONEL CHABERT.—Ah, you know me. You are in her confidence. Well, it is perhaps better. You have some papers for me to sign, Monsieur? *(Delbecq goes to table and unties papers.)*

COLONEL CHABERT (*aside.*)—Why do I distrust this man? He can do me no harm. I am past that.

DELBECQ.—Here, Colonel, is a document you will have to sign in order to make your renunciation legal. I have marked the place for your signature, Write your name in full, if you please. (*Chabert prepares to sign.*)

DELBECQ (*aside.*)—He suspects nothing. (*aloud.*) Ah, Colonel, you have signed many a paper in your life, no doubt.

COLONEL CHABERT.—Yes, but not lately. The last I signed was in the office of Monsieur Derville—(*he stops suddenly as if remembering something. He looks searchingly at Delbecq, then at the paper. He throws down the pen.*) I will read the paper first. (*he reads.*)

DELBECQ (*aside.*)—He is no fool after all.

COLONEL CHABERT.—But this is infamous!

DELBECQ (*in a low tone.*)—Well, I would not advise you to sign too quickly.

COLONEL CHABERT (*tearing paper.*)—I shall not sign at all.

DELBECQ (*after assuring himself that no one is listening.*)—You are right. Sign nothing. You can make an income of at least thirty thousand francs out of this. If you make it an object to me—

COLONEL CHABERT.—So! You are false to the Countess, as well as unworthy of the name of honest man! Away! Out of my path! I will have no dealings with such as you. (*he goes out on veranda.*)

DELBECQ (*picking up the torn paper.*)—He is not such a fool as he looks. I did not think he would sign without looking, though the Countess did. If she had taken my advice, and put the matter a little milder, filled it with legal phrases, he could not have understood it. My judgeship looks a little distant at present. She will be terribly angry. I hope he will not tell her that I advised him not to sign. If he does, I may give up all hope of Count Ferraud's aid in my preferment. I was a fool to do it. (*enter Countess.*)

COUNTRESS.—Well, did he sign?

DELBECQ (*showing her the torn paper.*)—No, Madame, he did this. I do not know how it happened, but the moment when he had all but signed, he took it into his head to read it. Then, of course, it was all over. I advised Madame to word it differently. (*enter Chabert, in deep thought, not observing them.*)

COUNTRESS.—What made the old fool do that? (*Chabert starts.*)

DELBECQ.—He is as stubborn as an old mule.

COUNTRESS.—He must be put in the mad-house.

(*Chabert comes forward and runs against Delbecq, whom he kicks and throws out of the window.*)

COLONEL CHABERT.—Mules kick. (*he returns slowly from the window, regarding the Countess fixedly.*) Oh, Rosine! (*he sinks in chair and rests his head on table. After a few moments silence the Countess kneels beside him and places her hand on his arm.*)

COUNTESS.—Paul!

COLONEL CHABERT (*springing up.*)—Do not touch me! Your touch is contamination. (*he paces up and down. Then pauses before her.*) I do not curse you. I do not hate you. I despise you. You have sunk too low even for vengeance, for we do not take vengeance on a cur. (*he spurns her with his foot.*) Get up! So! Let me look at you. Yes, I know you now, know the very depth of your little, contemptible nature, your greedy, selfish heart. I can now thank the chance that separated us, the sufferings and horrors that I have passed through prove to be blessings. Rather the grave than life with such as you. Live tranquil. I shall claim nothing from you, since to do that I might be forced to take you too. I shall not even claim the name I have perhaps rendered illustrious. I do not wish that to be besmirched with your infamy. If you have any humanity, any spark of womanly feeling, and I suppose you must have some since you are a mother, you will see that Monsieur Der-

ville is paid, and that the woman who saved me is rewarded. I require this of you. See that it is done. You shall never see me again, never hear of me, unless you fail in my last command. You will do this?

COUNTESS.—Yes, yes.

COLONEL CHABERT.—It is well. Then you have my word. You are safe. Authentically! (*he laughs bitterly.*) What is more binding than a soldier's word?

END OF ACT FOURTH.

EPILOGUE.

Road outside of Paris. Fifteen years are supposed to pass between Act IV. and Epilogue.

(*Enter Derville and Godeschal.*)

DERVILLE.—Yes, Godeschal, I have decided. I shall leave Paris forever, buy a place in the country somewhere, and live there tranquilly until I die. I am no longer young and am not able to work as I have done. Paris has become repugnant to me. I know it too well, and it fills me with horror. It is so fair to look upon, yet this beautiful semblance is but the covering of brutal vice. I can see nothing but the ghostly skeleton beneath the fair exterior. Do you know, my friend, there are three classes of men who cannot respect humanity, the priests, the

doctors and the lawyers? They all receive confessions, and carry on their shoulders the burden of the sins of others. Of the three, the lawyer bears the most. To the priest confession is contrition. Evil comes to him in remorse, repentant, seeking reformation. These are qualities that console, reconcile, purify the confessor. To the doctor it is a disease. He analyzes through the medium of science, and science changes the evil to a result, establishing a logical chain from the cause to effect, and the confessor becomes a logician, a scientist. Both priest and doctor can cure. But with us, we have the same evils without the consolations of repentance and of science, and we do not cure. We do not hear, "I am sorry" or "I am better." It is always "Help me to escape," "Help me hide." No reparation, no atonement, only to avoid the consequences. Ah, my friend, what have I not seen, what vice and crime has not passed through my office! I have seen fathers dying in poverty while their children roll in wealth. I have seen wills burned. I have seen mothers despoiling their children, husbands robbing their wives, wives killing their husbands. I have seen crimes and evils against which justice is powerless. All the catalogue of crimes and horrors that romance could conceive would not complete the list of those daily and nightly committed in our midst. Ah, my friend, you are just beginning to learn these agreeable things, but I have had enough of them.

GODESCHAL.—Yes, my dear old master, I know you are right. Paris, underneath, is the sink-hole

of crime and contamination. Even I have seen some of the crimes you mention.

DERVILLE.—You have been with me for a long time, Godeschal, and I take a fatherly interest in you. Do not let yourself grow callous and indifferent in your contact with these horrors. Take a leaf from my receipt-book. Go often to the country. Man made the city, but God made the country, and it is in the country that we come nearest to Him. Come here, if you can do no better. It is where I have spent many a happy hour, though not lately. Ah, I knew it well. See, over there is the new poor-house. They were digging the foundations when I was here last.

GODESCHAL.—Yes, and here come some of the unfortunate inmates.

(enter Chabert and several other paupers. Chabert seats himself on a rock by the roadside.)

DERVILLE.—Yes, it is so. Poor, unfortunate creatures! Why is it, Godeschal, that we all look upon this as the crowning misfortune of a life of misery? These men have probably never known such comforts in all their lives, yet notice their mournful expression, as if they felt this to be the acme of their degradation. See, they all have it, all except that old fellow with the pipe, and he is almost past feeling anything. He—Merciful Heavens! Can it be?

GODESCHAL.—Who? What?

DERVILLE.—It is not possible! But yet, it must be. That face, that scar, the missing arm—it is even so. What an ending!

GODESCHAL.—My dear friend, what has startled you?

DERVILLE.—I was startled by the discovery of the termination of a hideous drama that has been on my mind for fifteen years, and that has always been a mystery to me. I called your attention to that old man with the pipe. Observe him well. In him I find the solution. He is the victim of a deadlier and baser ingratitude than I ever imagined. Poor, poor man. Oh, Godeschal, the sight of him makes my heart bleed.

GODESCHAL.—Who is he, then?

DERVILLE.—You know the Countess Ferraud?

GODESCHAL.—Yes, I have seen her.

DERVILLE.—That old pauper is her legitimate husband, Colonel Chabert, and a Count of the Empire.

GODESCHAL.—Ah, he who was reported killed at Eylau? Why, then, is he here?

DERVILLE.—If he is here, it is because he reminded a woman that he took her, like a cab, from the streets. Ah, I saw the gleam of deadly hate in her eyes when he exposed her. This, then, is her revenge. Well, it is worthy of her.

GODESCHAL.—May one know the history? You have excited my sympathy for the old man.

DERVILLE.—It is a long story, but I can give you the principal points. Colonel Chabert was left for dead and was buried on the battlefield of Eylau. Escaping his tomb by a miracle, he is stricken by disease. Finally, after unheard of sufferings, he reaches Paris, only to be repulsed and denied by his wife, who had re-married, but who had received a letter from her husband before her second marriage. She, therefore, knew that Chabert was alive, but trusted that poverty and suffering would kill him or drive him out of his senses. After vainly trying to find some lawyer to take up his case, that was to be restored to his fortune and position, he came to me. Just why I did not believe him to be mad, as did all the others he had applied to, I cannot tell. Something about the man convinced me that he was what he claimed to be. Then I received from Germany papers proving beyond question his identity. Well, the day after the interview in my office between Colonel Chabert and his wife, in which he reminds her of her origin, he disappears, completely and without leaving a trace. A few days after this I received a letter from the Countess in which she states that the Colonel has admitted that he is an impostor and has dropped all claim against her. I searched for him for some time, knowing him to be Colonel Chabert and suspecting foul play, but until this moment have never received any tidings concerning him. He is Colonel Chabert, yet he is here, a pauper. Let us go closer and see if he remembers me.

(*during the foregoing speech all the paupers but Chabert have gone out.*)

DERVILLE.—Good morning, comrade.

COLONEL CHABERT (*saluting.*)—Good morning, good morning.

DERVILLE (*aside to Godeschal.*)—Ah, no, he has no recollection of my voice.

GODESCHAL.—Call him by name.

DERVILLE.—Colonel Chabert!

COLONEL CHABERT.—Not Chabert, not Chabert, Monsieur. My name is Hyacinthe, number 164, seventh division. I—I—Monsieur Derville!

DERVILLE.—Do you remember me?

COLONEL CHABERT.—Yes, Monsieur.

DERVILLE.—How is it that if you are an honest man you have been content to remain my debtor?

COLONEL CHABERT.—What! Has not Madame Ferraud paid you?

DERVILLE.—Paid me! She wrote me that you acknowledged yourself to be an impostor.

COLONEL CHABERT.—My God! Can this be true? She promised—Have you a piece of paper? And a crayon? Thank you, thank you. (*he writes.*) Send that to her, Monsieur, send that to her. She will pay you. Believe me, I have not forgotten your generosity to me. That is the one bright remembrance of my life. But a pauper can

do little more than remember, and sometimes not even that, sometimes not even that.

DERVILLE.—But, Colbnel, why are you here? If you consented to renounce everything, did you not at least stipulate an income?

COLONEL CHABERT.—No, no, do not speak of that. I have forgotten all that, forgotten all that. At least I try to do so. It comes back to me sometimes, though, in all the horrid vividness of that last scene, when she stood unmasked in all the rottenness of her heart. No, no! Let me not think of that! The thought is madness.

GODESCHAL.—You have overexerted yourself. There, lean back and rest.

DERVILLE.—But your life here must be horrible.

COLONEL CHABERT.—Here? In the poor-house? I do not live there. My poor body rests there, but not I, not I. I live in the past. The present is nothing to me. Napoleon is dead. What have I to live for? Nothing, nothing, nothing. My pipe is my only friend. We sit and think together. Great friends, great friends.

DERVILLE.—But, Colonel Chabert—

COLONEL CHABERT.—Not Chabert, not Chabert. Hyacinthe, the old soldier, Mousieur. He is not married. He is happy.

GODESCHAL.—Poor man. The momentary flash of intelligence has gone out. He is in his second childhood.

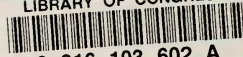
DERVILLE.—Oh, Godeschal, Godeschal! Let us go. This scene unnerves me. I can stand no more. What a fate! (*exit Derville and Godeschal.*)

(*Chabert does not notice their departure, but continues staring vacantly, amusing himself by letting sand run through his fingers. Gradually his actions become more and more weak, and he leans against the tree, apparently dying.*)

COLONEL CHABERT (*in a very weak voice.*)—Great friends, great friends. We are— (*the words cease to be audible, but his lips continue moving. Suddenly he sits erect.*) The day is ours! Forward!! Viva Napoleon!! Viva Napol—(*he sinks back dead.*)

FINIS.

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